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U.S. ROLE IN SINAI IMPORTANT TO MIDEAST PEACE.(U)

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The Honorable Charles H. Percy
Chairman, Committee on Foreign
Relations
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Subject: U.S. Role in Sinai Important to Mideast Peace.
(ID-81-62)

As you requested in your letter of August 13, 1981, we are reporting the results of our review of the U.S. peacekeeping role in the Sinai. This report summarizes U.S. involvement and presents some of the issues the Congress will want to consider in the establishment of the new multinational peacekeeping force.

The United States has played a leading role in preserving the peace in the Sinai (the strategic peninsula directly adjacent to Israel's western border) since the 1973 war between Egypt and Israel. Through U.S. "shuttle diplomacy," Egyptian and Israeli forces were separated with buffer zones between them. Then in 1976, the United States established a civilian tactical early warning system in the strategic mountain passes of the Sinai to monitor adherence to the terms of the Sinai agreements. The United States, as a result of the current peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, will deploy armed forces in the Sinai as part of a multinational peacekeeping force to supervise implementation of the treaty. This deepening U.S. involvement in the Sinai is crucial to the peace process, but also raises serious issues for congressional consideration.

SINAI FIELD MISSION HELPED ASSURE
PEACE FOR 5 YEARS

The U.S. Sinai Field Mission, established in 1976 under the Sinai II Disengagement Agreement between Israel and Egypt has been an unqualified success. Although its role has changed from the operation of a tactical electronic early warning station to the conduct of periodic verification inspections in 1980, it has earned the respect of both the Israelis and the Egyptians. This support is evidenced by the request of both parties for a civilian observer force to be made a part of the soon-to-be-established multinational peacekeeping force.

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Following the 1973 Mideast war, an initial disengagement agreement (Sinai I) was concluded on January 18, 1974, between Israel and Egypt. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in early 1975, began his intensive diplomatic effort to achieve a second agreement which would sustain a more far-reaching armistice. This effort culminated in the signing of the Sinai II agreement on September 1, 1975. Sinai II broadened the narrow buffer zone established under Sinai I to include the strategic Giddi and Mitla Passes.

During the course of the Sinai II negotiations it became clear that both sides desired an explicit American presence in the Sinai as a precondition for signing the agreement. At the request of both parties, the United States agreed to build a tactical early warning station in the Giddi and the Mitla Passes to be manned entirely by American civilians. The Congress authorized this activity on October 13, 1975, with passage of Public Law 94-110. On January 13, 1976, Executive Order 11896 established the U.S. Sinai Support Mission and its operating arm, the U.S. Sinai Field Mission (SFM). The field mission became fully operational on February 22, 1976.¹/ The basic duties of the SFM were to report any movements of armed forces into the strategic Giddi and Mitla Passes or any preparation for such movement and to verify the nature of operations of Israeli and Egyptian electronic surveillance stations in the buffer zone.

At the height of its surveillance activities, the SFM employed about 175 American civilians to operate and maintain the system, which included unattended electronic sensor fields, manned watch stations, and a modern "Base Camp" overlooking the western approaches to the Giddi Pass. The total area monitored by the SFM from 1976 until January 25, 1980, covered about 240 square miles, and during this period SFM reported 90 violations of the Peace Agreement--most of them minor in nature and quickly corrected.

As a result of the March 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt and Executive Order 12150 of July 23, 1979, the role of the SFM was extended through January 1980. During trilateral talks between the United States, Israel, and Egypt in September 1979, the United States agreed to verify force levels and armaments in Zones A and B in the Sinai and at four Israeli technical installations (known as "T" sites) in the interim buffer zone. The map in enclosure I compares this new mission to the more limited area of responsibility in the original SFM mandate. The SFM was given the

¹/For details of the events surrounding the establishment of the SFM see our report entitled "An Evaluation of the U.S. Early Warning System in the Sinai" (ID-77-11, June 6, 1977).

responsibility of operating the new verification system until April 25, 1982, when, under the term of the Peace Treaty, Israel will complete its scheduled withdrawal from the Sinai. This new role expanded the SFM's area of responsibility from the restricted 240 square miles of the original electronic early warning station, which was deactivated in February 1980, to two-thirds of the entire Sinai or over 15,600 square miles.

To carry out this mandate to change from a relatively static observation system to a highly mobile inspection and verification role, three helicopters were leased and stationed at a small airstrip adjacent to the SFM. Although the SFM's geographic area of responsibility increased dramatically in this new role, it required fewer personnel--only 137 personnel were assigned to the Field Mission as of February 1981. From its inception in 1976 through its projected phase-out in April 1982, the total cost of the Sinai peacekeeping operation will be about \$103 million.

MULTINATIONAL MILITARY FORCE
NOW BEING ESTABLISHED

The establishment of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), marks the first time U.S. military units have been introduced into the peace process. The expected costs to the United States will greatly exceed that incurred in the operation of the SFM. According to U.S. side letters to the Protocol establishing the MFO, the U.S. contribution will be at least \$170 million over the first 2-1/2 years. Legislation to authorize U.S. participation in the MFO is currently being considered by the Congress.

The March 1979 Treaty of Peace between Israel and Egypt calls for a peacekeeping force and observers to monitor the parties' compliance with the Treaty terms and to perform specified functions designed to enhance the mutual confidence of the Parties. The Treaty calls for this mission to be carried out by the United Nations (UN). However, if the UN cannot perform this mission, then the United States, in separate letters to each of the parties, guaranteed that "the President will be prepared to take those steps necessary to ensure the establishment and maintenance of an acceptable alternative multinational force." Under the specter of an expected Soviet veto of a UN force, the President of the Security Council reported on May 18, 1981, that the members of the Council were unable to reach an agreement which would authorize a force and observers as envisioned in the treaty. This shifted the responsibility for the creation of a force acceptable to both parties to the United States.

From March through July 1981, the United States, Egypt, and Israel negotiated a Protocol establishing the multinational force which was signed on August 3, 1981. The Protocol calls for the

Multinational Force and Observers, numbering about 2,500 persons, to undertake the functions and responsibilities stipulated in the Treaty, including verification of Egyptian and Israeli adherence to force and armament limitations in controlled areas and ensuring freedom of navigation through the Strait of Tiran. The U.S. contribution to the MFO will be over 1,200 persons, including 808 in an infantry battalion, a logistics and support unit of 356 personnel, and approximately 50 civilian observers. These observers will perform a mission similar to that of the Sinai Field Mission. In fact, some of the same personnel will probably be used by the MFO. In addition, two 500-man infantry battalions, along with units for communications and for boat and air operations, will be provided by other countries from outside the region. The United States is still finalizing arrangements with these countries, and so far only Fiji, Colombia, and Uruguay have formally offered to participate.

The forces will be deployed at two major camps and 20 to 30 observation posts and check points along the Egypt-Israel border. MFO headquarters--including the military commander, two light infantry battalions, support units, and the civilian observers--will be stationed at the Israeli-built Eitam airbase (known to the Egyptians as al Gorah) in the north. The U.S. battalion will be in the south, near Sharm el Sheikh.

Under the negotiated agreement, the costs of the MFO will be shared by the United States, Egypt, and Israel. As shown in the following table, total start-up and operating costs through 1983 are estimated at \$324 million.

<u>Country</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>Total</u>
United States	\$10	\$125	\$ 35	\$ 170
Egypt	20	25a/	35	77
Israel	<u>20</u>	<u>25a/</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>77</u>
Total	<u>\$50</u>	<u>\$175</u>	<u>\$105</u>	<u>\$324</u>

a/Egypt and Israel are actually required to contribute \$45 million in 1982, but they will receive credit for the \$20 million payments advanced in 1981. The table reflects only the additional \$25 million which will be paid out in 1982.

Under the agreement, the United States pays 60 percent of the start-up and construction costs during 1981 and 1982. Starting in 1983, the estimated annual operating cost is to be divided equally among the three countries. In addition, the United States has agreed to continue surveillance flights over the entire Sinai, absorbing the full cost estimated at \$8 million annually.

In addition, the agreement provides that the

- Director General of the MFO will be an American and will be headquartered somewhere other than Israel or Egypt,
- military ground commander will be appointed by the Director General and will not be an American,
- United States agrees to use its best efforts, in conjunction with Egypt and Israel, to find acceptable replacements for contingents that withdraw from the MFO and ensure the maintenance of an acceptable MFO, and
- MFO will be an international organization whose annual operating budget will be submitted to and approved by the contributing countries--that is, the United States, Egypt, and Israel.

According to State Department officials, start-up costs include about \$105 million for construction of housing and operational facilities in the Sinai, \$10 million for communications equipment, and \$10 million for vehicles. The construction costs are still very preliminary, with major concerns such as water supply and electric power distribution still unsettled.

Withdrawing Israeli forces will leave behind some facilities that will be of use to the MFO. Barracks and office buildings at Eitam air base will be left for MFO use, and other facilities in the areas to be used by the MFO are being studied and discussed. Any such arrangements would have to involve Egypt, which assumes control of the areas after Israeli withdrawal. The Sinai Field Mission also has equipment such as vehicles, generators, and electronic instruments which may be useful to the MFO. U.S. officials told us they have been surveying these sources of possible support as they decide on new construction and equipment needs.

The battalions will be equipped with jeeps and trucks with no tracked or armored vehicles such as tanks or armored personnel carriers included. They will be armed with machine guns and light mortars, with no anti-tank or heavy artillery capability.

The personnel costs of developing countries providing troops will be paid by MFO using the UN reimbursement formula, which provides approximately \$900 to \$1,000 a month per soldier. Developed countries, including the United States, will be expected to pay the basic personnel costs for the troops they provide. For the United States, these personnel costs are estimated at \$26 million annually, and are paid through Department of Defense appropriations. In addition, the United States is providing the equipment

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and vehicles to be used for its troops; the money MFO is spending on vehicles and communications equipment will supply the other MFO contingents. We were unable to estimate the cost of U.S. equipment involved.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION
BY THE CONGRESS

The United States is committed, as a part of the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, to arrange a multinational peacekeeping force in the Sinai, and the basic outline of such a force has now been negotiated. However, many details of the U.S. involvement in the Sinai still must be worked out and the Congress will want to carefully consider, during its review of the authorization and appropriation request for U.S. participation in the MFO, the implications of the U.S. involvement and the controls and limits that would be desirable. Some of these key concerns follow.

- The agreement calls for a UN peacekeeping force, if possible. Although it has been impossible to obtain UN approval, this should still be the ultimate objective for a peacekeeping force. The Congress may want to emphasize to executive branch decision-makers that efforts to involve the UN should continue, aimed at eventually replacing the MFO with a UN peacekeeping force.
- Current plans envision a U.S. military contingent of about 800 soldiers and 350 support personnel. If other participants, now expected to contribute about 1,300 troops, should drop out of the MFO, the United States, along with Egypt and Israel, will make its best efforts to find replacements. If another contributor could not be found, then this obligation could require additional U.S. troops to maintain a credible force. The Congress should consider the maximum desirable number of U.S. troops in the Sinai and may want to impose limits on the total U.S. military contribution.
- The agreement for an MFO is now open-ended with no time limit on the deployment. The Congress may want to consider the need for a periodic review of the authorization for the MFO to ensure that the need still exists and the deployment is still in U.S. interests. Because the agreement negotiated by Egypt and Israel does not establish a time limit, imposition of such a limit on U.S. participation, according to some State Department officials, could cause uncertainty about U.S. intentions. Some congressional control is available through the annual

appropriations process for the U.S. share of the MFO's operating costs. A periodic report on MFO activities, such as the semi-annual report required for the Sinai Support Mission, could also be useful.

- The specific role of the combat troops assigned to the MFO and their operating instructions and procedures in various contingencies have not yet been determined. The Congress will want to review these procedures to ensure that the (1) American forces are adequately protected and able to defend themselves and (2) Congress' rights under the War Powers Resolution are upheld.
- The State Department estimates start-up costs of over \$200 million for the MFO in 1981 and 1982, with about 60 percent coming from the United States. The Congress may want to require the executive agencies to make maximum possible use of existing Egyptian and Israeli facilities in the region, including available electric and water utilities, before constructing new facilities. In this regard, it may also be possible to transfer equipment or facilities from the Sinai Field Mission when it terminates.
- Because U.S. participation in the MFO will involve policy decisions and actions by many agencies, the Congress may want to require the executive branch to establish a focal point within the U.S. Government to manage U.S. participation. This focal point could be structured along the lines of the present Sinai Support Mission which has experience in the Sinai peacekeeping process since 1976. An interagency mechanism, similar to the Sinai Interagency Board advising the Support Mission in its current efforts, could also be useful in coordinating the various agencies involved.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our review of the U.S. peacekeeping role in the Sinai was conducted as part of an overall look at the developing U.S.-Egyptian defense relationship. Our objectives were to examine the operation of the Sinai Field Mission since its establishment in 1976 and to identify some of the major issues the Congress will want to consider in authorizing U.S. participation in the new multinational peacekeeping force which is replacing the Field Mission.

Our work was performed during January to July 1981. We interviewed officials of the Sinai Support Mission in Washington, reviewed semi-annual reports on the Mission's activities, and discussed the

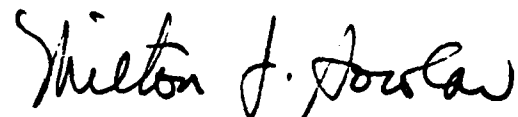
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new multinational peacekeeping force. We also reviewed the Protocol signed by the United States, Egypt, and Israel for the new force. In addition, we discussed the operation of the Field Mission and the prospects for the multinational force with officials at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Egypt. During our work in Egypt, we also visited the Sinai Field Mission, discussed plans for the phase-out of the Mission with officials there, and viewed the facilities and equipment of the Field Mission.

As requested by your office, we did not obtain agency comments on this report. As arranged with your office, we are sending copies of this report to the Secretaries of State and Defense and to other interested congressional committees.

If we can be of further assistance in this matter, please let us know. We expect to provide you with our full report on U.S.-Egyptian defense relationships within a few months.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Milton J. Fowler".

Acting Comptroller General
of the United States

Enclosure

SINAI PENINSULA SHOWING
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL U.S. EARLY
WARNING STATION

